



Data Points

RESULTS FROM THE CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

The terms "food security" and "food insecurity" represent relatively new concepts on the topic of hunger. Food security means that a household has assured access to enough food that is also nutritionally adequate and safe. Food insecurity reflects the emotional stress and anxiety experienced by women due to the lack of available funds to buy food. It also reflects compromising behaviors by women who choose lower cost and less nutritious food, or who choose to buy food instead of paying for medical or other household expenses.¹ Food security is an important dimension of basic individual and family well being, similar to health or housing. On the other hand, food insecurity and hunger are undesirable in their own right and possible precursors to more serious health and developmental problems.²

The U.S. Department of Agriculture developed a six-question severity scale that is used to produce estimates of the amount of food insecurity in the nation.

This same measure can also be used to estimate food insecurity for each state's population.¹ The California Women's Health Survey asked women these six questions.

- Among California women, 22% were food insecure—that is they did not always have access to enough food to meet basic needs.
- Women with less than a 9th grade education were more likely to be food insecure than women with higher levels of education. As education increased, the percent of women who were food insecure decreased.
- Over 90% of women with less than a ninth grade education were Hispanic.

¹ Gary Bickel, Margaret Andrews and Bruce Klein, "Measuring Food Security in the U.S.: A Supplement to the CPS." USDA Food and Consumer Service, Office of Analysis and Evaluation, Alexandria, VA January 1996.

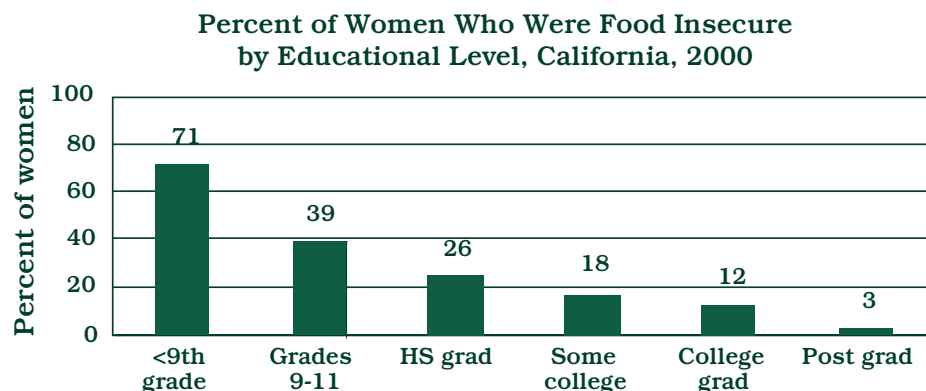
² The Rhode Island Food Security Monitoring Project: Assessing the Prevalence of Hunger and Food Insecurity in Rhode Island, Summary Report. The Rhode Island Department of Health, Division of Family Health, November 1999.

FOOD INSECURITY AMONG WOMEN BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL, CALIFORNIA, 2000

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Public Health Message:

While 22% of California women surveyed were food insecure, those with less than a 9th grade education were over three times more likely to be food insecure than women with a high school diploma. Outreach efforts to women with less education should be focused on the available food support systems.



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